

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 AID-20 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00

DRC-01 PC-15 /173 W

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P 021245Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1365

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 8479

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT US VE

SUBJ: COPEI'S COMPLAINT ABOUT ALLEGED USG SUPPORT FOR AD

REF: CARACAS 8420

1. EVENING OF OCTOBER 1 I CALLED, AT MY REQUEST, ON
SECRETARY GENERAL OF PRESIDENCY, LUIS ALBERTO
MACHADO, AND MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. IT HAS BEEN AND WILL REMAIN FIRM USG POLICY
TO MAINTAIN ABSOLUTE NEUTRALITY AND NON-INVOLVEMENT
IN VENEZUELAN ELECTORAL PROCESS, PARTICULARLY THE
CURRENT NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. WE HAVE TAKEN
EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THIS POLICY KNOWN TO EVERYONE
CONCERNED.

B. WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY INCIDENT OR DEVELOPMENT
WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY BELIEF THAT THERE HAS BEEN
ANYTHING LESS THAN COMPLETE COMPLIANCE WITH THIS
POLICY.

C. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS ONLY POLICY
WHICH ADEQUATELY SERVES USG INTEREST.

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D. WE ARE, THEREFORE, CONCERNED AT POSSIBILITY OF DOUBTS EXISTING ON THE VENEZUELAN SIDE OF OUR ADHERENCE TO POLICY. THIS POSSIBILITY CAME MORE SPECIFICALLY TO MY ATTENTION THROUGH CONVERSATION WHICH MR. EDUARDO AGUILAR HAD WITH EMBASSY OFFICER DAVID COX ON SEPTEMBER 26. I WAS ALSO CONCERNED TO OBSERVE THAT IN SOME PUBLISHED POLITICAL PARTY PROPAGANDA OF COPEI ALLY FDP PARTY (THOUGH NOT OF COPEI ITSELF) THE KWTRE CARTOONS

ALLEGING USG PARTISANSHIP IN ELECTION AGAINST COPEI. I THOUGHT IT ADVISABLE TO SEEK OUT SECRETARY GENERAL TO RESTATE OFFICIALLY AS CHARGE D'AFFAIRES THAT USG IS ABSOLUTELY NEUTRAL AND UNINVOLVED IN VENEZUELAN POLITICAL PROCESS.

2. I ALSO SAID TO MACHADO THAT WE WERE AWARE OF VENEZUELAN COMPLAINTS THAT SOME AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES WERE GIVING ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO OPPOSITION PARTY. I SAID THAT EMBASSY DOES NOT SPEAK FOR PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS OR COMPANIES. HOWEVER, EMBASSY HAD TAKEN PAINS TO INSURE THAT U.S. OIL COMPANIES IN VENEZUELA WERE AWARE OF USG POSITION AGAINST INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNAL POLITICS. I SAID THAT IT SEEMED CLEAR TO US THAT COMPANIES' OWN INTERESTS COULD ONLY BE SERVED BY RIGIDLY OBSERVING POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND NON-INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS. I WOULD BE SURPRISED IF COMPANIES BELIECVPGOOB ERWISE. I CONCLUDED THAT WE HAVE NO INFORMATION WHICH SUPPORTS ALLEGATIONS OF COMPANY INVOLVEMENT.

3. MACHADO SAID THAT HE COULD ASSURE ME THAT HIS GOVERNMENT AND THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP HARBORED NO DOUBTS ABOUT USG'S NEUTRALITY AND NON-INTERVENTION IN VENEZUELAN INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS. IF IT WERE OTHERWISE, WE WOULD KNOW ABOUT IT, AS VENEZUELA WOULD NOT TOLERATE OUTSIDE INTERVENTION. HE AGREED THAT EVERY CONSIDERATION OF LOGIC AND PRACTICALITY DICTATED THAT USG SHOULD FOLLOW POLICY I HAD MENTIONED, AND HE THOUGHT THE SAME APPLIED TO THE AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES.

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HE WAS CONVINCED THAT LATTER, WHICH WERE EXPERIENCED AND RESPECTED IN THIS COUNTRY, UNDERSTOOD THIS BEFORE ANYONE ELSE. AN OCCASIONAL TRANSGRESSION BY SOME UNDISCIPLINED SUBORDINATE WAS PROBABLY INEVITABLE, BUT THIS KIND OF INCIDENT WOULD BE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE. SIMILARLY, THERE MIGHT BE SELF-SEEKING EFFORTS BY UNDERLINGS ON VENEZUELAN SIDE TO EXPLOIT ANIT-US OR ANTI-COMPANY PROPAGANDA FOR AN IMAGINED POLITICAL ADVANTAGE,

BUT THIS LIKEWISE WOULD BE UNREPRESENTATIVE AND WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE. HE STRESSED THAT NATIONALISM OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WAS DEMOCRATIC AND CONSTRUCTIVE ONE, AGAINST EXTREMISM AT BOTH ENDS OF SPECTRUM BUT NEITHER ANIT-US NOR ANTI-COMPANY. HE MENTIONED IN PASSING THE NEED IN COMING YEARS FOR A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES TO PROVIDE FOR AN ASSURED MARKET FOR VENEZUELAN OIL AND AN ASSURED OIL SOURCE FOR THE U.S.

4. MACHADO SAID HE WAS GLAD I HAD BROUGHT MY CONCERN TO HIM, AS REAFFIRMATION AND CLARIFICATION ON BOTH SIDES WAS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL. HE SAID HE WOULD LATER IN EVENING MENTION MY VISIT TO PRESIDENT CALDERA.

5. COMMENT: IF THERE WERE IN FACT ANY SERIOUS SENTIMENT IN COPEI IN FAVOR OF PUBLICLY ATTACKING AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES AND PERHAPS USG IN SEARCH OF POLITICAL ADVANTAGE IN REMAINING WEEKS OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN, MACHADO'S REMARKS TO ME SUGGEST THAT THERE IS A POWERFUL, AND I BELIEVE CONTROLLING, ELEMENT AT THE TOP WHICH WILL OPPOSE IT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973CARACA08479
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS FISHER
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731057/aaaabprx.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CARACAS 8420
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COPEI'S COMPLAINT ABOUT ALLEGED USG SUPPORT FOR AD
TAGS: PINT, US, VE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005